A LETTER

FROM A

Person of Quality

IN THE NORTH

To a Friend in *LONDON*,

CONCERNING

Bishop Lake's

Late Declaration

Of his Dying in the Belief of the Doctrine

OF

PASSIVE OBEDIENCE,

AS THE

Distinguishing Character of the

CHURCH of ENGLAND.

Licens'd *Sept.* 19th. 1689. *J. F.*

LONDON, Printed for *Awnsham Churchill* at the *Black-Swan* near *Amen-Corner*. 1689.

12.

XUM

A

LETTER

FROM A

Person of Quality

IN THE NORTH

To a Friend in LONDON,

CONCERNING

Bishop Lake's

Late Declaration

Of his Dying in the Belief of the Doctrine

OF

PASSIVE OBEDIENCE,

AS THE

Distinguishing Character of the

CHURCH of ENGLAND.

Licens'd Sept. 19th. 1689. J. F.

LONDON, Printed for Awnsham Churchill at the Black Swan near Amen Corner. 1689.

A LETTER FROM A Perſon of Quality.

Dear Sir,

YOU may wonder, that at this time of day I ſhould begin to talk to you of Biſhop *Lake*'s Death, for which I dare ſay both of us have before this, paid our juſt Tribute of Sorrow, and for whoſe Memory every *True Proteſtant* muſt have a very particular Reſpect, ſo long as the Courage and Conſtancy of the *Seven Biſhops* remains upon Record; which I verily believe will be till time ſhall be no more: But ſome (as if this Glorious Action had not been enough to have ſecured his Fame to all Eternity) ſeem rather deſirous to tranſmit him to Poſterity by another Diſtinguiſhing Character; that of the Great Champion for *Paſſive Obedience*; thinking that to be a greater Honour than to be recorded for one of the great Maintainers and Aſſertors of the *Proteſtant Religion*, and the *Engliſh Liberties*; For there is a Paper ſent abroad about our Country, atteſted not only by his own Hand, but alſo by ſeveral unqueſtionable Witneſſes, wherein the Good Biſhop on his Death-Bed declares, *That he had been brought up in, and had al-*

ſo taught others that great Doctrine of Paſſive Obedience, *which he always look't upon as the Diſtinguiſhing Character of the Church of* England, *and that he would not have taken the Oath, though the Penalty had been Loſs of Life; but found great Satisfaction and Conſolation in his Mind becauſe he had not taken it; and theſe he deſired might be look'd upon as the Words of a Dying Man, and ſo repreſented to his Friends.* But whether thoſe Friends had not done him as good Service if they had kept it to themſelves, and not repreſented it to the World, I think may be a Queſtion: for I muſt confeſs 'tis a little unaccountable to me what Deſigns they could have in Publiſhing it: For 'tis ſo far from being neceſſary on the Biſhop's account, that 'twas really impertinent: For he that at that time was under, and had ſubmitted to a Suſpenſion, meerly upon his refuſal of the Oaths, had certainly given the World as convincing a Proof of his Opinion, as if he had printed a Thouſand Volumes about it: So that there was no more occaſion (I think of making, but I am ſure) of Publiſhing ſuch a Declaration, than there is for my Lord Biſhop of *Cant.* to Print *Manifeſtoes*, to tell the People he is ſuſpended on the ſame account. And ſince there was ſo very little Reaſon to do it on the Biſhop's Score, the Motives and Deſigns had need be very good that can juſtifie their doing it on their own. Had either they or the Biſhop given us the Reaſons of his adhering to that Opinion, beſides that of his being bred and born in it, (an Argument that a *Turk* or *Pagan* may have for the Truth of their Religion), they might have obliged the World exceedingly; but the only Motives at leaſt that are to me apparent, for telling us what we knew before, I think might as well have been ſpared: for there are Two Inferences which may very eaſily be made from the

Paper,

Paper, and which I ſuſpect was the chief aim in publiſhing: The Firſt is to inſinuate, that from the beginning of the Reformation, ever ſince the Church of *England* was reſtored to its Purity, *Paſſive Obedience* was the Corner-ſtone of it: for 'tis call'd, *The Diſtinguiſhing Character of the Church of* England: ſo that it ſeems none was accounted her true Sons that did not hold it. Now if this be true, here's the whole Body of the Clergy in Queen *Elizabeth*'s days cut off from the Church of *England* at one blow; for 'tis not the Opinion of one or two private Prelates, but the whole *Convocation*, who agree not only in giving the Queen ſo very large Subſidies, but alſo in declaring the accounts on which they did it; and that was aſſiſting and protecting the *Scotch* and *French Proteſtants*, and for abating all Hoſtilities againſt the true Profeſſors of Gods holy Goſpel, and for the advancing the free profeſſion of the Goſpel within and without Her Majeſties Dominions; and a great deal more to this purpoſe, as may be ſeen at large in the Preambles to the Three Subſidy Bills, given the *5th* of *Eliz.* l. 24. the *35th* of *Eliz.* c. 12. and the *43d* of *Eliz.* c. 17. So that 'tis apparent it was their practice for Forty years, and I hope their Faith alſo: for I cannot be ſo uncharitable as to think they would ſin againſt their Conſcience, and purchaſe Damnation at ſo dear a rate, as thoſe vaſt Sums they gave for the aſſiſtance of thoſe that I am ſure did reſiſt their Kings, and who according to the Doctrine of *Paſſive Obedience*, ought to have been look'd upon, and uſed as Rebels. And truly, whatever is pretended, their Doctrine was agreeable to their practice; for altho the Book of *Homilies* hath been ſo often cited for the confirmation of this Doctrine, yet the Example of *David*, which is ſo much recommended to us in the *2d Homily* againſt *Rebellion*, for his Loyalty and our imitation, that is we deſire to ſtand or fall by; for if the Subject

ject may be allow'd to take up (as we are sure *David* did against *Saul*) Defensive Arms, I think they would be very unreasonable to desire any more. But this having been enlarged on by better Pens, I shall say no more of it; but cannot pass by the Epithet of the *distinguishing Character of the Church of* England, without some *Animadversions* on it: And, first, I would ask you, Sir, whether you think it necessary for particular Churches to have particular *distinguishing* Doctrines? For I must confess, to me (but if I am in an Error I hope you will correct it) it appears so far from necessary, that I think 'tis very inconvenient when particular Churches have such distinguishing Doctrines: for I believe it has been the occasion of all the Schisms in the World. For since, as the Apostle saith, *Eph.* 4. 5. there is but *one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism*; and I may add, *one Church, and one Truth*. Why should we not (at least endeavour to) be all of one mind, and not affect little distinctions, which oftentimes create great Animosities? of which our present Age can give too many sad instances. But alas, the Disease did not begin, neither will it, I fear, end with us; for we find St. *Paul* reproving it in his *Corinthians*, as that which occasioned all their Divisions; while one cryed he was of *Paul*, and another of *Apollo*, and I of *Cephas*, and I of *Christ*: So that it seems they did not only give their particular Teachers the preference above others, but also set them in opposition to Christ; but to such I may ask the Apostles Question, Who is *Paul*, or who is *Apollos*, but Ministers by whom you have believed? But if *Paul*, or an Angel Preach any other Gospel, let him be *Anathema*; and the same thing may, and I think ought to be said of Churches, when they impose any thing but what is the true Catholick Faith. Therefore to say such a Doctrine

is

is particular to such a Church, and that which distinguisheth it from the Catholick, is indeed to say the worst thing in the World of it; and to own that is not any part of the Catholick Faith. And why Bishop *Lake*, or any body, should value a Doctrine so much on that score, is that I cannot comprehend. And in my Opinion, it would more have become his Lordship, if as the Office for the Sick directs, he had made a Confession of the Christian Faith contain'd in the Apostles Creed, which unquestionably he believ'd; but it would satisfy us *Lay-people* very much, if those Gentlemen who have attested this *Recognition* of his *distinguishing* Faith, would Print another Paper, to assure us that he rehearsed the Articles of our *Common Creed*; that we may not be misled by the Example of a Bishop, to depart from the Rules of the Church when we come to die, and instead of the Christian Faith, declare we believe just quite contrary to his *Distinguishing* Faith; that in some cases *Resistance* is lawful.

But I fear I have already tired you by being so large on my First Inference, therefore shall endeavour to be as short on the Second as I can, and that I take to be this; that from the Bishops declaring he would not have taken the Oath to have *saved his Life*, and that his not taking it was the *great Consolation* he had at that time, they would insinuate that the taking of the Oath is a very wicked unlawful thing: For they being the words of a dying Man just going to receive the *Sacrament*, ought to be the more credited, and to make the deeper impression; for so good a Man as he could not be easily deceived himself, and at such time 'tis certain did not design to deceive others. To which I shall crave leave to Reply, *First*, That as to the main

Question

Queſtion of the Lawfulneſs of the Oath, it has been ſo fully and ſo ſatisfactorily diſcuſſed already, that I am very confident you and I know ſome that have taken it with as good a Conſcience as Biſhop *Lake* or any body could refuſe it with; therefore it would be ſuperfluous to ſay any thing on that point: But only wiſh that inſtead of urging any humane Example, both ſides would remember the Divine Rule of St. *Paul*, Rom. 14. 3. *Let not him that eateth deſpiſe him that eateth not; and let not him that eateth not judge him that eateth.*

But then, *Secondly*, as to the Authority that Biſhop *Lake*'s Dying Words ought to have over mine or any Mans judgment, I muſt declare, that till Infallibility be, I will not ſay the diſtinguiſhing Character, but the inſeparable Attendant of a good Man, I cannot ſay that they ought to influence any body any farther than they appear true and reaſonable. For if dying Mens Sentiments were to be the Rule of our Faith, we ſhould have a very uncertain Standard. For you muſt know that once I was acquainted with a Papiſt, that I think, ſetting aſide his Opinion, was a very good Man, for he led a good Life; and when this Perſon came to die, he did it with as great confidence, and comfort too, as could be imagined; and expreſs'd as great ſatisfaction in his not being a Proteſtant, as the Biſhop could in not taking the Oaths. So that we may ſee 'tis only the ſtrong perſwaſion of the Party, and not the truth of the Tenets, that produces that ſort of Conſolation. For I am confident the Biſhop himſelf would not have approved of the Argument, had I turned Papiſt on that dying Mans declaration. But it ſeems ſome think it no great matter what we turn now; for I hear ſome are ſo exceeding fierce, that they will hardly allow thoſe which

which have taken the new Oathes to be ſo much as out-lyers of the Church of *England*; but to be ſure none muſt be within the Pail that have not the diſtinguiſhing character; and truly the number of the encloſed will be ſo ſmall, that King *James* himſelf could hardly have hoped to have contracted the Church of *England* in ſo ſmall a compaſs; and may in part be ſaid to have got his ends of us, for I am ſure he has done more miſchief by the Diviſions he has occaſioned among our ſelves, than he could have done by his Perſecutions. But although ſome Perſons indiſcreet Zeal have made them ſo uncharitable, I am as far from ſuppoſing it the temper of all the worthy Men of that Party, as I am from believing the Doctrine of *Paſſive Obedience* in that *unlimited* ſence it was Preached up by ſome, was the univerſal Opinion of the Church of *England* in any Age. For that it was not ſo for Forty Years of Queen *Elizabeth*'s Reign has been made pretty evident by matter of fact; and that it is not ſo at this day, I think may be demonſtrated by the ſame way of Argumentation. For although I might have ſuppoſed it poſſible that a few particular private Perſons might for intereſt ſake have diſclaimed their former Opinion, and comply'd with any thing; yet truly I have ſo much reſpect for the Clergy of the Church of *England*, as not to believe that the whole Body of them could be guilty of ſo mean a thing; to ſay no worſe of it. For really the Diſſenters, in compariſon, are ſo few, that had there not been ſome Names of note among them, they would hardly have been reckoned a number; which gives me great hopes that thoſe great and good Men, whom we look'd upon as the Pillars of our Church, will not forſake the ſtations they ſo well became, for the ſake of a particular private Doctrine, which was no way eſſential

XUM

either to the being, or well-being of the Church, but whoſe only uſe was to diſtinguiſh the Church of *England* from all the Churches in the World, and that is really from the Catholick Church. For this Biſhop *Lake* ſeems to me to own, when he calls it the *diſtinguiſhing Character* of the Church of *England*; and ſo truly it may ſtill continue if they pleaſe, for I believe there is no other Church ſo fond of it, as to rob us of it, if to be carried ſo high as ſome would have it. But if taken in its limited and true ſence, *Paſſive Obedience* muſt be acknowledged ſo neceſſary a Duty, that the World could not well ſubſiſt without it. And I am very confident, that all the difference about it has been occaſioned by a little miſtake, in applying thoſe Rules to *Communities*, which were given to particular *private Perſons*, and only deſigned for ſuch. For although in my ſingle private capacity I ought to ſubmit to, and ſuffer the greateſt injuſtice, rather than diſobey the lawful Magiſtrate, and diſturb the Government: Yet as I am an *Engliſh* Man, I think I am as much obliged, by all tyes both Civil and Sacred, to defend and maintain that Government and Conſtitution of which I am a Member, as I am to obey the King; and that being the Primary Obligation, ought to be diſcharged in the firſt place; but the ſafety of that being ſecured, Subjects ought to obey without any other reſerve. And this ſeems to me ſo evident, that I think it needs no further proof, though 'tis capable of the cleareſt, if it were neceſſary, as I hope it is not; for after all, I am very confident that the greateſt and beſt of our Diſſenters are of my mind in this point, as might very eaſily be proved, if they would pleaſe but truly to reſolve me one Queſtion; and that is, Whether they did not both wiſh and pray, that *London-derry* ſhould

be

be delivered out of the hands of those merciless Butchers? and this the excellency of their temper, as well as their Christianity, obliging to, I cannot at all question but they did; nay, I verily believe they would have gone further, and assisted them with their Purses, if they had known how to have conveyed them Relief.

And now pray let us a little consider the Consequences of this; for if the Doctrine is true, *That 'tis unlawful to take up Arms for the Defence of our Lives and Liberties*, then all those great and gallant Men were certainly great Rebels, and whosoever did assist or abet them, incurr'd the same guilt: so that for any thing I see, we may all shake hands as to that matter. But in case I should be mistaken, and they were not so good natur'd (as I do still believe they were), but did desire that so many thousand innocent persons might fall into the hands of their bloody implacable Enemies: If, I say, they could wish this, it would give me a greater prejudice against the Doctrine than ever yet I had. Since it not only made them put off those Bowels of Mercies which Christians out to have for one another, but even devested them of common Humanity. For unless it be the *Papists*, I know no other Sect that is arrived to that height of Barbarity, as to wish, that so many thousand persons (who they never saw, nor never did them any wrong) should perish, only becaufe they were not of their Opinion; and if this could be their Temper, I'm sure I would never be their Proselyte; for I should dread it as much as *Popery* it self; and so truly I believe those good men do. But I forget my self, having already, I fear, exceeded the bounds of a Letter, and trespass'd too much on your patience. But whatever the Effect may be, I hope the Cause is pardonable, becaufe it proceeds from

from that intire Confidence I have both in your Judgment and Friendſhip, that all my Notions muſt be approved by you, before they can be ſo, by,

Dear Sir,

Your moſt intirely affectionate

Friend and Servant.

FINIS.